

SUPPORT HB596

Topic: Wildlife Corridor Action Plan: Interagency Implementation Group

Bill Patron: Delegate Simonds & Delegate Gardner

OVERVIEW:

This bill establishes an Interagency Implementation Group to coordinate and advance projects, policies, and priorities identified in the Virginia Wildlife Corridor Action Plan (WCAP). Led by the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources and the Secretary of Transportation, the group includes representatives from state agencies, federally recognized tribes, and the Virginia Safe Wildlife Corridors Collaborative. It formalizes roles, data-sharing, training, and project coordination to ensure statewide alignment on wildlife crossing and habitat connectivity efforts. Progress will be reported annually to the General Assembly.

REASONS TO SUPPORT:

The Interagency Implementation Group ensures Virginia moves from planning to action on wildlife corridors. By coordinating across agencies and partners, this bill enhances driver safety, protects wildlife, and maximizes the impact of the Wildlife Corridor Action Plan, without additional cost to the state.

Improves Coordination Across Agencies

Creates a formal structure for collaboration between state agencies, localities, NGOs, and tribes. Annual reporting to the General Assembly ensures measurable progress and public visibility of efforts.

Promotes Data-Driven Decision-Making

Facilitates sharing of wildlife-vehicle collision data with localities and regional planners to target projects where they are most needed for safety and conservation impact.

Supports Local Connectivity Planning

Provides guidance, mapping, and data to help communities plan effective local wildlife crossings and corridor projects.

Enhances Education and Training

Offers training for state agencies and localities on the benefits, cost-effectiveness, and implementation of wildlife crossings and connectivity strategies.

Prioritizes Projects for Maximum Impact

Ensures projects identified in the WCAP are coordinated and implemented efficiently to reduce collisions, protect wildlife, and conserve critical habitats.



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This position was taken by Virginia Conservation Network (VCN)'s Legislative Committee and Board of Directors and is supported by Virginia's conservation community. For a complete list of VCN positions, visit www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker. VCN is committed to building a powerful, diverse, and highly-coordinated conservation movement focused on protecting our Commonwealth's natural resources today and for tomorrow.